

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: June 11, 2015

Agenda Item: Klamert Ranch Conservation Easement (R5)

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Endorsement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

The Klamert Ranch comprises approximately 17,300 acres of private land northeast of Melstone, adjacent to the Musselshell River in FWP Regions 5 and 7. This property provides high quality sagebrush habitat as well as 2 miles of Musselshell River and associated riparian habitats. The land is within designated sage-grouse core areas and provides important mule deer winter range. White-tailed deer, antelope, Merriam's turkey, sharp-tailed grouse, pheasant, gray partridge, furbearers, and native nongame species, including several species of concern, also occur on the property. The Klamert Ranch is located within Focal Areas of greatest conservation need, as identified in the 2014 State Wildlife Action Plan.

The landowner and his family intend to provide quality wildlife habitat while maintaining their livelihood. They are interested in providing additional public access for hunting, fishing, and recreation in an area where opportunities are limited. A conservation easement would maintain the conservation values and associated public benefits while helping fulfill the landowner's management objectives.

Public Involvement Process & Results

FWP has not sought any public comment at this time. Upon endorsement from the Commission, FWP would conduct appropriate analyses, public review processes and negotiations.

Alternatives and Analysis

The conservation easement alternative allows the property to remain in private ownership while conserving and enhancing habitat, and providing recreational access. The property is located in sage-grouse core areas and includes thousands of acres of high value sagebrush grasslands as well as other important wildlife habitats. If FWP took no action, the land may eventually be converted to farm ground or other land uses, which would substantially reduce wildlife habitat values.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

Because of the importance of conserving this land, including the high resource values and public recreational opportunities, FWP recommends that the Commission endorse this proposal so that FWP may proceed to further develop this opportunity.

Proposed Motion

I move the Fish & Wildlife Commission endorse this conservation easement project, allowing FWP to continue negotiations and to conduct analysis and associated public review.